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The situation in the Middle East

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 21 July 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On behalf of my Government, in its capacity as Chair of the Arab Group for the month of July 2017, I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement that the Council of the League of Arab States adopted at its extraordinary session at the level of Permanent Representatives held in Cairo on 17 July 2017 on recent developments and Israeli violations in Jerusalem and the Haram al-Sharif (see annex).

It would be highly appreciated if the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Caroline **Ziade**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the identical letters dated 21 July 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

Statement regarding recent developments and Israeli violations in Jerusalem and the Haram al-Sharif issued by the Council of the League of Arab States convened at the level of Permanent Representatives at its extraordinary session held in Cairo on 17 July 2017

On 17 July 2017, the Council of the League of Arab States held an extraordinary session at the level of Permanent Representatives to review the unprecedented events that have occurred and the measures that were taken by the occupying Israeli authorities at the noble Aqsa Mosque, which they closed off to worshippers and evacuated. They also seized the keys to the mosque, tampered with property therein and prohibited Friday prayers and the call to prayer at the mosque. This is not to mention their efforts to change the historical status quo of the Haram al-Sharif and install metal detectors, thereby imposing yet another fait accompli and establishing a grave precedent the likes of which has not occurred for nearly half a century, when the Aqsa Mosque was set ablaze in 1969 in a criminal act of terrorism. Those actions will lead to an extremely serious escalation in the situation with grave consequences, and could spark a religious war in the region. Those events are taking place as Israel accelerates its ongoing efforts, which are backed by military force, to implement long-standing plans to Judaize the occupied city of Jerusalem and divide the Haram al-Sharif temporally and spatially. The occupying authorities have escalated their offensive against the Haram al-Sharif by increasing excavation work at the site, conducting more frequent raids and further defiling the mosque, brazenly violating the rights and sacred sites of the Palestinian people and the Arab and Muslim nations, as well as the resolutions of the General Assembly, Security Council, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the Human Rights Council, all of which have repeatedly affirmed that the occupied city of Jerusalem is an integral part of the Palestinian territory that was occupied in 1967 and underscored that the Haram al-Sharif is strictly a Muslim holy site.

The Council condemns those measures and holds the occupying authorities fully responsible for any encroachment on the noble Aqsa Mosque and any action taken with respect to its collections and documents. The Council reiterates that it rejects any change to the status quo with regard to the occupied city of Jerusalem and the Aqsa Mosque, and underscores that all Israeli actions must be halted and rescinded, and that the status quo ante must be restored. This includes the removal of the metal detectors and restoring freedom of worship and the established right of the Palestinian people to practice their religion.

The Council once again calls on the international community and international organizations to fulfil their responsibility to respond to this unprecedented Israeli aggression. They must intervene immediately and implement the relevant resolutions, particularly with regard to the protection of Islamic and Christian holy sites, and the protection of the Palestinian people in their territory and at their holy sites. The Council warns of the serious danger posed by this latest act of aggression. Israel, the occupying Power, continues to commit grave violations, defy the will of and mock the international community and flout international resolutions. Such

conduct will have repercussions for the region and the prospects of arriving at a just and comprehensive peace and implementing the two-State solution.

The Council hails the steadfastness of the people of Jerusalem and their institutions, and all of the Palestinian people for defending the Arab identity of the Holy City and the Haram al-Sharif, and draws attention to the efforts of the Palestinian leadership under His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas. The Council greatly appreciates the role played by and the efforts of His Majesty Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and reiterates its support for the Hashemites' historical role as guardians and patrons of the Islamic and Christian holy sites of Jerusalem, and its rejection of any attempt whatsoever to encroach on those sites. It also commends His Majesty Mohammed VI, the King of the Kingdom Morocco and Chair of the Quds Committee, for his efforts to safeguard the Holy City. The Council underscores that the entire Muslim nation, both States and peoples, stands with the Palestinian people and their leadership in defence of the sanctity of the Aqsa Mosque and the Arab identity of East Jerusalem, the capital of the independent State of Palestine.